

ZOLA, NOVELIST AND BEFOKMER  
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tresses of raven hair resting on her young white  
neck ; \* but  
even she remains little more than a vision,  
and as yet,  
neither into Zola's life nor his friends' does  
woman, the real  
creature of flesh and blood, really enter, to  
achieve that  
work of disillusion by which she almost  
invariably destroys  
the youthful ecstasy which she, or her  
semblance, has in-  
spired. Ninon, the Ninon of the "Contes,"<sup>2</sup>  
comes later.  
As yet she is only dreamt of, though the  
name by which  
she is to be known to the world is already  
suggested by an  
old gravestone in the cemetery, with only the  
word " Nina "

remaining of its time-worn inscription :

" Ami, te souviens-tu de la tombe noircie,  
Tout au bord d'une allée, & demi sous les  
fleurs,  
Qui nous retint longtemps, et nous laissa  
xeveurs ?  
Le marbre en. est rongé par les vents et la  
pluie.  
Elle songe dans l'herbe et, discrète, se tait,  
" Souriante et sereine au blond soleil de mai.

" Elle songe dans l'herbe, et, de sa rêverie,  
' La tombe, chastement, & ceux qui passent la,  
J'Ste livre que le nom efface

Ami, te souviens-tu, nous la r&v&mes belle,  
Et depuis bien souvent, sans jamais parler  
d'elle,  
Nos regards se sont dit, dans un dernier  
regret :  
<sup>7</sup> Si je l'avais connue, oh ! Ninette vivrait ! '"  
<sup>8</sup>

But serious trouble was now impending in  
Zola's home.  
While he studied at the college, while his  
heart opened and

<sup>1</sup> Zola's Verses, " A. mes Amis " (Lycee St. Louis, 1858).

<sup>3</sup> Zola's first book, inspired largely by memories of  
Provence, and issued in  
Paris in 1864.

<sup>8</sup> Zola's "Fina," 1859. Readers of "La Fortune des

Rougon" (which  
Zola wrote some ten years later) will remember that the old  
tombstone figures  
also in that work, in which the inscription is given as \*' Here  
lieth Marie  
. . . , died . . . , " the finger of time having effaced the rest.  
There is, how-  
ever, an evident connection between the names Nina and  
Ninon, and perhaps  
they suggested K"ana.